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Tests needed before city can sell land

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The land is a former railroad and industrial site
and was contaminated by asbestos.

The Montana Department of Environmental Quality would require further testing for contamination before the south portion of city-owned land adjacent to Peets Hill could be developed, DEQ project officer David Bowers said Friday.

The city owns a 14-acre parcel just south of Main Street and intends to build a new library on the north half. The south half could be kept as open space, but library trustees and other city officials are considering selling that portion to offset library construction costs.

The land is a former railroad and industrial site and was contaminated by asbestos. The city worked with DEQ on a voluntary clean-up plan and removed contamination from the area near Main Street where the library would be built.

"As far as signing off on the contamination that was removed from the area, all of that, yes we are prepared to sign off," Bowers said.

DEQ hasn't signed off already only because it is waiting to see the final library "footprint" to make sure the rest of the cleaned-up area has been prop-

erly revegetated, Bowers said.

Several developers are reportedly interested in the land south of the library for multifamily housing.

But the clean-up plan only included the fenced area on the north end, Bowers said, so further investigation would be needed before development could proceed.

The city did contract for an investigation of the entire 14 acres before purchasing the land, Bowers said. But that "due diligence" study didn't look for

near Peets Hill

asbestos on the south part of the property because at the time DEQ and others familiar with the site thought the ore had been limited to the north half.

Library Director Alice Meister said the library board would contract for the required testing before selling the land. The cost of that would reduce the proceeds, but the city would still expect to net from \$700,000 to \$1.2 million in a sale.

Bowers met with city officials in Bozeman Thursday to discuss the parcel and Meister said the results were positive.

"What I took from the meeting was that the city would be able to proceed in its library project," Meister said.

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